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COVENTRY  
BRETHREN CHURCH

THE SECOND OLDEST BRE-  
THREN CHURCH IN AMERICA











A HISTORY  
OF THE  
COVENTRY BRETHREN CHURCH  
IN  
CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

THE SECOND OLDEST BRETHREN CHURCH IN AMERICA

BY  
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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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THINKING that a sketch of the early history of the Coventry Brethren Church would be of interest to its members, and hoping that it might tend to preserve the history of the second oldest Brethren church in America, and in the world, too, the following article, introductory to the "Genealogy of the Urner Family," is republished.

Appended to it will also be found brief biographical references to the successive preachers of the church.

Also a list of the members in 1890, when the third church building was erected.

While the Germantown Church was organized ten months earlier than the Coventry Church, the latter, according to Abraham H. Cassel, is, in some respects, more properly the mother church of the Brethren denomination in America than the Germantown Church, as the Coventry Church in early times colonized frequently and largely, and in this way was the means of founding many of the early churches, while the Germantown Church, owing to its location in a town, colonized very little.

We are told that no early records of the Coventry Church were kept. It seems so improbable that such a church would have no records, "all the early preachers being men of talent and ability," that the more reasonable supposition is that the records have been lost. Even so intelligent a man as the late Rev. Isaac Price

did not know the time of its organization by some fifty years. In a letter, still extant, written in 1882, when, however, he was eighty years old, writing of his grandfather, George Price, having moved from Indian Creek, Montgomery County, to Nantmeal township, Chester County, before the Revolutionary War, and of a Brethren interest that he, George Price, labored to build up in Nantmeal, he said that it was nearly as old as the Coventry Church. George Price moved to Nantmeal in the fall of 1773 or in the spring of 1774, the latter date most likely, and the Coventry Church was founded in 1724, fifty years earlier.

But for Morgan Edwards's work,\* "Materials toward a History of the American Baptists," published in Philadelphia in 1770, and the "Chronicon Ephratense," † published in Ephrata, Lancaster County, in 1786, we should know almost nothing of the origin, organization, and early history of the church, except through vague and unreliable family traditions, and such additional light as might be furnished by patents and deeds for land, by wills and tax-lists, and by inscriptions on tombstones.

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\* The work of Morgan Edwards, referred to above, has long been out of print, and but few copies are extant. There is a copy of the work in the library of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, corner of Locust and Thirteenth Streets, Philadelphia.

† A good English translation of the "Chronicon Ephratense" was made by J. Max Hark, D.D., in 1889, and published by S. H. Zahm & Co., Lancaster City, Pennsylvania, of whom copies can be obtained.

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## COVENTRY BRETHREN CHURCH.

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As the Urners were the founders of the Coventry Brethren Church, and its preachers and bishops for the first eighty-seven years of its existence, a sketch of its history seems the proper introduction to the genealogy of the Urner family.

The Coventry Church took its name from the township in which it is located, and the township is supposed to have received its name through Samuel Nutt, an early settler and iron-master, who came from Coventry, in Warwickshire, in England. The township first took the name Coventry in the year 1724, the same year in which the Church was organized. Previously the district was known in the assessment lists, which contained the names of Jacob, Hans, and Martin Urner, as "Skoolkill District" in 1719, and as "Scoolkil" in 1722. At its formation the township of Coventry comprised not only the land along the Schuylkill River, now North Coventry, East Coventry, South Coventry, but all of the upper part of Chester County, and even a part of the present county of Lancaster.\*

The Brethren, as the members have always called themselves, have sometimes been called the First Day Baptists, to distinguish them from the Seventh Day Baptists; sometimes they have been called the German

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\* See Futhey's "History of Chester County," page 172.

Baptists, to distinguish them from the Baptists; and sometimes they are called Dunkers, and Tunkers, from an attempted transliteration of the German word meaning Baptist.

In the latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries vigorous attempts were made by the Protestants of Germany and Holland to reform some of the errors of the Churches. These efforts produced violent opposition and persecutions. They also resulted in heavy emigration of the common people and of many of the learned to America. Of those who did not immediately emigrate, many moved into districts whose rulers had themselves been awakened and so granted to the refugees liberty to worship as they pleased. At Schwarzenau, in the Province of Witgenstein, the first Brethren Church ever organized was started in 1708, with the following eight constituent members: Brethren George Grebe, of Hesse-Cassel; Luke Vetter, of Hesse-Cassel; Alexander Mack, of Schriesheim in the Palatinate; Alexander Bony, of Basle, Switzerland; John Kipping, of Bareit, Wirtemberg; and Sisters Johanna Noetinger Bony, Anne Margareta Mack, Johanna Kipping.

By studying the Bible these people were led to believer's baptism and Congregational church government, and this in a place where Baptists had never been known. As they increased in numbers, persecutions followed. Some were driven into Holland, some to Crefeld in the Duchy of Cleves; and the Mother Church at Schwarzenau moved to Serustervin in Friesland; and in 1719 they emigrated in a body to Pennsylvania, and settled at Germantown; a few scattering to Skippack, Falckner's Swamp, and Oley. This colony consisted of about twenty families.

Though very zealous for the truth, they had bickerings and jealousies even during their sojourning in Europe, and while this first colony of Brethren was crossing the ocean, trouble broke out afresh among the members. So for several years after their arrival there were no religious efforts put forth by them. But in the fall of 1722 several of the Germantown Brethren,—Becker, Gommere, Gantz, and the Trauts, visited the scattered Brethren. In the fall of the following year there was an occurrence that finally bridged over their separation and brought them to organize themselves into a church. This event was the application of six “persons on the Schuylkill” for baptism. These “persons on the Schuylkill” lived thirty-five miles up the river, and comprised Martin Urner and his wife and four neighbors. This organization of the Germantown Church and baptism of these first six converts took place on the 25th day of December, 1723. In the “Chronicon Ephratense,” pages 22 and 23 of the translation by J. Max Hark, D.D., this happening is referred to in the following words :

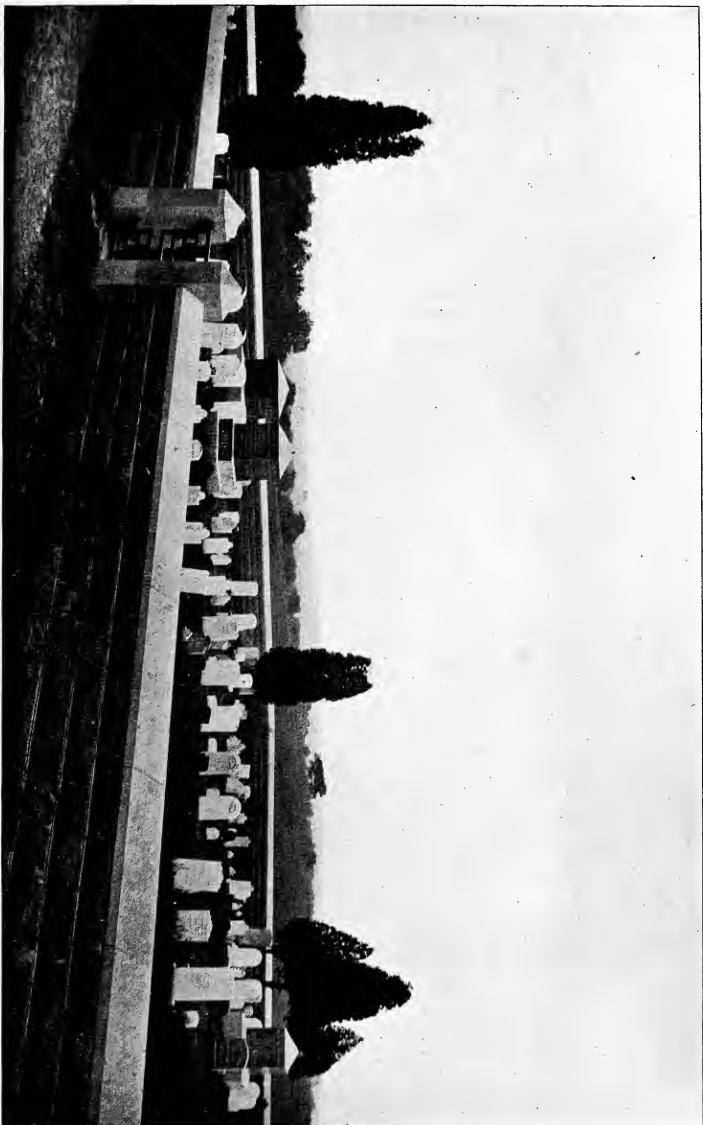
“In August of the year 1723 a rumor was spread through the country that Christ. Libe, a famous Baptist teacher who had long been in the galleys, had arrived in Philadelphia. This moved some newly awakened persons on the Schuylkill to go forth to meet him. The whole thing, however, was a fiction. These persons were persuaded by the Baptists [Brethren] to go with them to their meeting, during and after which they heard so much of the Germans’ awakening that they went home very much edified. Soon after a second visit was made to Germantown, by which both parties were so much edified that the Germantown Baptists [Brethren] promised them a visit in return, which they made four weeks

afterwards with great blessing. The newly awakened ones were thereby stirred up still more, so that they begged to be received into their Communion by Holy Baptism. This was the occasion of important proceedings among the Brethren in Germantown, for they still had in mind the misunderstandings which had arisen between them and their Brethren at Creyfeld. Besides, they were, indeed, a branch of a congregation but yet not a congregation that dared to presume to administer the sacraments. The worst was that they were divided among themselves and had only lately commenced to draw nigh to one another again. After they had seriously pondered over all these things in the spirit, they finally agreed to consent to the request. Accordingly, after the candidates for baptism had chosen Peter Becker to be their baptizer, they were baptized in the stream Wiskohikung [Wissahickon], near Germantown, on December 25, of the year 1723. And as these were the firstlings of all baptized among the high Germans in America, their names shall be here recorded and given to posterity,—namely, Martin Urner and his female house-mate, Henry Landis and his house-mate, Frederick Lang, and Jan Mayle. The evening following they held the first love-feast ever celebrated in America at John Gommere's, which created a great stir among the people of that neighborhood; Peter Becker, mentioned before, ministering at the same.

“Through such a Divine happening the Baptists [Brethren] in Pennsylvania became a congregation.”

At the organization of the Germantown Church, in addition to the six who had just been baptized, were the following seventeen members: Peter Becker, Henry Traut, Jeremiah Traut, Balsar Traut, Henry Holzapfel,





COVENTRY BRETHREN GRAVEYARD, FOUNDED IN 1743.



John Gommere, Stephen Koch, Jacob Koch, John Hildebrand, Daniel Ritter, George Balsler Gansz, John Preisz, John Kaempfer,—thirteen brethren; and Magdalena Traut, Anna Gommere, Maria Hildebrand, and Johanna Gansz,—four sisters.

In the spring of 1724 they resumed their meetings with great success, particularly among the young. During the summer the fame of their awakening spread abroad, and there was such an increase of attendance that there was not room for their accommodation. They also now deemed it well to make a full report of their reunion and success to the Brethren in Germany. They also resolved on a general visitation of all the Brethren in the country. They started out on the 23d of October, and visited Skippack, Falckner's Swamp, and Oley; holding meetings with breaking of bread at these several places. They then visited "the newly baptized Brethren on the Schuylkill," where two persons were baptized, and on November 7, 1724, the COVENTRY BRETHREN CHURCH was there formally organized, being the second Brethren church in America. The following were the nine constituent members: Martin Urner and his wife, Catharine; Henry Landis and wife; Daniel Eiker and wife; Peter Heffly, Owen Longacre, and Andrew Sell. Martin Urner was made preacher, and when Alexander Mack arrived in America, in 1729, Martin Urner was ordained bishop by him.

The visiting Germantown Brethren then proceeded up to Conestoga, now a part of Lancaster County. Here they also had a successful meeting, and, after baptizing seven, on the 12th day of November, 1724, they organized the Conestoga Church, which was the third Brethren church in America. This Conestoga

Church is often spoken of as the Ephrata Church, as it was near where the town of Ephrata was subsequently built. The members of this new church made Conrad Beissel, who was one of the seven who had just been baptized, their preacher. This Beissel was a man of considerable ability, but of a dreamy, visionary turn of mind, and gave the Brethren churches much trouble during the remainder of his life. He died in 1768. By his peculiar views he divided the Conestoga Church, in 1728, in two parts,—the Brethren, who remained true to their faith, and the Seventh Day Baptists, his followers. He went off into Sabbatarianism, Monachism, and the advocacy of celibacy. He also built at Ephrata a monastery and a nunnery. The Conestoga Church was by this greatly weakened. The Germantown Church also lost many members, who moved up to Ephrata. The Coventry Church, owing to the good sense and conservatism of Martin Urner and his members, suffered the loss of but few.

In the year 1729, Alexander Mack, before mentioned as one of the founders of the Brethren Church, with the rest of the Brethren still remaining in Europe, emigrated also to Pennsylvania. This colony was composed of about thirty families. This large addition greatly stimulated the Brethren in America, and largely counteracted the deleterious effects of the Beissel secession. The following churches were soon after organized: The Oley Church, in 1732; Great Swamp, in 1733; Amwell, New Jersey, in 1733; Cocalico, in 1735; White Oakland, in 1736; Conowango, in 1738; and others soon after.

Owing to the location of the Germantown Church in a town, it never made much progress in numbers. The practice of feet-washing, of trine immersion, and the

efforts of some to force a peculiarity of dress upon the members, in imitation of the Quakers, may have been felt as burdensome to persons living in a town. And many of the more emotional of the members found joy in burying themselves in the cloisters of Ephrata and in the wilds of Conestoga.

In the Coventry Church a more healthy sentiment always prevailed; while it had many accessions, its growth in number was retarded by heavy colonizations from the Church. The members were mostly farmers, and while the land was good, the lands in other localities were better. Some moved to what was then called the Conococheague, now embraced in Franklin and Perry Counties, in Pennsylvania, and Washington County, Maryland; some to the Shenandoah Valley, in Virginia; and some to Carroll and Frederick Counties, in Maryland, where the Urners, the Wolfes, and the Crumbachers are still found. This migration, while it greatly reduced the church in number, made its influence, on the denomination at large, very great. While the Germantown Church was historically and by some ten months priority of organization the mother church, the Coventry Church was practically the mother church.

But for the schism in the Conestoga Church caused by Conrad Beissel, that church might have divided honors with the Coventry Church.\*

The Brethren churches in America now number one hundred thousand members.

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\* See article of A. H. Cassel, in the "Christian Family Companion" of April 9, 1872, pages 228, 229.

## MARTIN URNER, SR.

Martin Urner, the founder of the Coventry Brethren Church, and its first bishop, was born in Alsace, then a province of France, in the year 1695. The family had been driven by religious persecution out of the Canton of Uri, Switzerland, whence the name Urner, and took refuge in Alsace. About 1708, Ulrich Urner, with his three sons,—Jacob, Hans, and Martin,—emigrated to Pennsylvania, and is said to have settled for a while at Roxborough, near Philadelphia. In 1712 the name of Martin Urner appears among the settlers of Lancaster County.\* In 1718 he bought a tract of four hundred and fifty acres of land of the Penns, in what is now called Coventry Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania, on the Schuylkill River immediately opposite the present town of Pottstown. On this property, now called Belwood, he and his descendants lived long years afterwards, and on part of the property the Coventry Brethren Church and the Coventry Brethren Graveyard are located. He died in 1755, and was buried in the Coventry Brethren Graveyard.

The following account of this Martin Urner is found in the work called "Materials toward a History of the American Baptists," published, 1770, by Morgan Edwards, then Fellow of Rhode Island College and Overseer of the Baptist Church in Philadelphia.

"MARTIN URNER, SR., was born in Alsace about the year 1695, and was bred a Presbyterian. He came to America in 1715. [Earlier, about 1708.] He em-

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\* See Rupp's "Thirty Thousand Names," Appendix III., ed. of 1876.

braced the Principles of the Baptists in 1722; was ordained by Alexander Mack in 1729, at which time he took upon himself the oversight of the church. He died in 1755 and was buried in the graveyard at Coventry. His wife was Catharine Reist, by whom he had the following children: Mary, Martin, and Jacob. These married into the Wolff, Edis, and Light families. Assistant to Mr. Urner was one Casper Ingles."

#### MARTIN URNER, JR.

The second bishop of the Coventry Church was Martin Urner, Jr., son of Jacob Urner and nephew of the first Martin Urner. He was born 1725, one mile northeast of the present town of Pottstown, Pennsylvania. He early joined the church, and was active in all its offices. On the death of Martin Urner, Sr., in 1755, the entire charge of the church fell on him. He was ordained bishop in 1756. He continued preaching to the church with marked success until the time of his death in 1799. After the death of his uncle, Martin Urner, Sr., he bought the homestead and made it his permanent home.

In the year 1772, during his ministry, the first house of worship was built for the Coventry Church.

Prior to the building of this first meeting-house the members met by turns at the homes of different Brethren, though generally at the home of Martin Urner. It was customary to stay and take dinner after preaching, and spend the afternoon in conversation, singing, and prayer. This proved so edifying that it drew many into the church. The Germantown Brethren did the same, but in 1770 they built their meeting-house.

As the Coventry Church was at that time very closely connected with the Germantown Church, two years after, in 1772, they also built a meeting-house.

This Martin Urner died in 1799, and was buried in the Coventry Brethren Graveyard.

The following anecdote is told of this Martin Urner by David Urner, of Springfield, Ohio, of the fifth generation, in a letter to the writer of this sketch, dated October 14, 1872.

“I never saw my grandfather, Martin Urner, as he died a few years before I was born. I learned, however, from an old friend, that he was esteemed by his brethren in the church and ministry, as a preacher of more than ordinary ability; so much so, that at their yearly meetings he was always one of the number that were called upon to preach. My friend said that on one occasion when the Yearly Meeting was held in Philadelphia, as the preachers from the country were jogging along on horseback, going to that meeting, one of the preachers said to my grandfather, ‘As you will no doubt be called on to preach at this meeting, I want you to preach particularly against the wearing of fine clothes, as the brethren and sisters of Philadelphia are becoming entirely too fashionable in their dress.’ And although he urged the matter lengthily, he thought my grandfather did not give all heed to what he said, and asked, ‘Did you hear what I said?’ and the answer was, ‘Yes.’ The next question was, ‘Will you do it?’ when my grandfather replied, ‘If I am called on to preach, I hope I shall have something of more importance than to talk to the people about the rags with which they cover themselves.’”

Morgan Edwards gives the following account of this Martin Urner:

“The next and present minister [1770] is Rev. Martin Urner, Jr. He is nephew to the forementioned Martin Urner. He was born in 1725, in New Hanover Township and County of Philadelphia. Was ordained in 1756, at which time he took on



him the care of the congregation. His assistant is Mr. Peter Reinhart. Mr. Urner married Barbara Switzer, by whom he has children, Mary, Joseph, Martin, and Elizabeth."

In the Brethren's Almanac of 1873, page 15, published by H. R. Holsinger, at Dale City, Pennsylvania, we have the following fuller account by Abraham H. Cassel, of Harleysville, Pennsylvania, the historian of the Brethren Church.

"MARTIN URNER, JR.

"Martin Urner, Jr., was a very popular preacher among the ancient worthies. He was a brother's son, or nephew, of the before-mentioned Martin Urner, Sr., and was born in New Hanover Township, then in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, but now in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in the year 1725. He became a member of the church at Coventry while very young in life, and after serving in her different offices with exemplary piety and disinterested zeal, he was finally promoted to the office of bishop, being ordained in 1756. From that time on, the sole care of the church devolved upon him, until released by death. He died in May, 1799, in the seventy-fourth year of his age. He was married to Sister Barbara Switzer, of Coventry, by whom he had children, Mary, Joseph, Martin, and Elizabeth, who have raised him a numerous progeny, many of whom are still in fellowship with the Brethren.

"This Brother Urner appears to have been somewhat of a revivalist, as the church flourished greatly under his ministerial labors. He was also the bosom friend of Alexander Mack, as their correspondence manifests the most intimate terms of love and friendship between

them during life, and the record of his death, also, is in language that bespeaks great tenderness and affection for him."

JONAS URNER.

The Urner family gave a third preacher to the Coventry Brethren Church, Jonas Urner. He was the son of the second Martin Urner, and, beginning to preach to the church at an early age, he continued to preach to it down to 1811, when he moved to Carroll County, Maryland, and labored with the Pipe Creek Church. He died in 1813, and his remains were buried in the Wolfe Graveyard, in Carroll County.

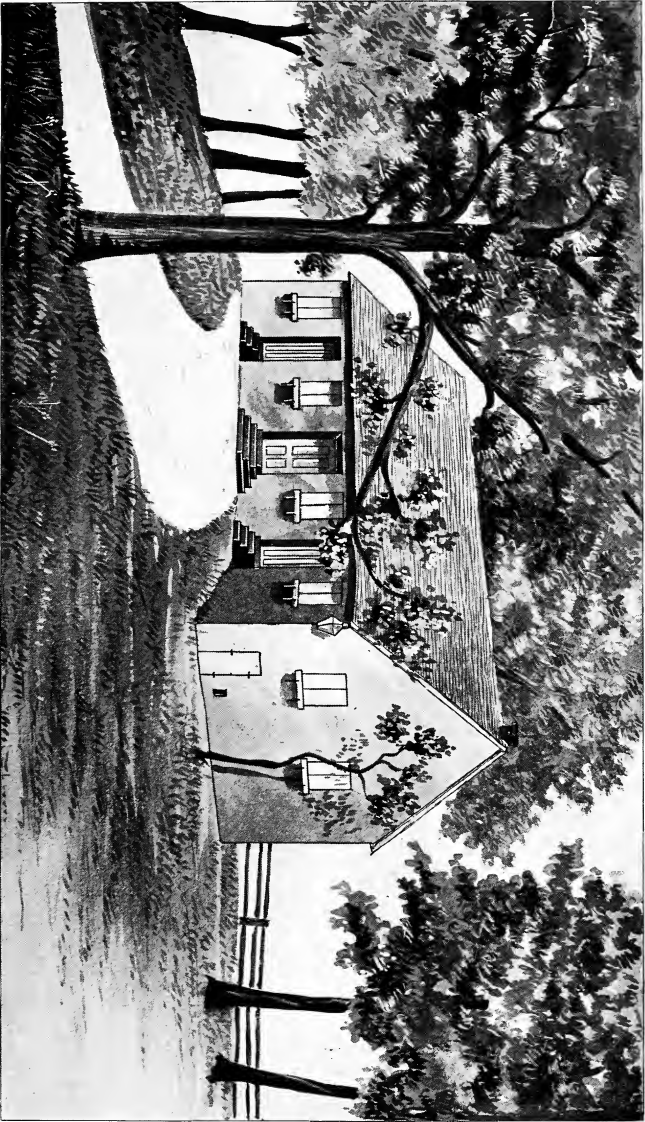
LETTER OF ABRAHAM H. CASSEL AS TO WHEN THE  
FIRST HOUSE WAS BUILT AND WHEN REBUILT.

"HARLEYSVILLE, PA., March 18, 1890.

"ISAAC N. URNER :

"DEAR SIR,—Yours of the 15th inst. just to hand. I am sorry that I cannot give you absolutely certain dates, but corroborative incidents seem to settle it satisfactorily in my mind that the present building was erected in 1817. Many years ago, when I first commenced writing sketches of the early churches, I made considerable inquiry of those who assisted in the building, and never heard of any other than 1817; and I was also informed that when they resolved on building the new house, they bought a half-acre of ground from Daniel Urner, I think, to enlarge the meeting-house lot, which was in 1817, according to the conveyance; which I think should settle that point beyond a doubt. James Wells being the architect, I think you might find some papers among his descendants that would substantiate that date.

"You are correct about the church being founded in 1724, but they had no meeting-house for a long time, as the old Brethren were opposed to having a meeting-house. They held their meetings in a kind of rotation, at Martin Urner's and at four other places, and the custom then was that where the



COVENTRY BRETHERN CHURCH, SECOND BUILDING, ERECTED IN 1817.



meeting was most of the people stayed for dinner, and the afternoons were spent in private conversation, singing, and prayer, which was so edifying to the people that it was the means of drawing many into the church. The Germantown Brethren did the same, and it there also brought many into the church. In 1770, however, the Germantown Brethren built a meeting-house, which was the first that the Brethren had in America. For all of this I have original documents. As the Coventry Church was then a branch of the Germantown Church, they took example of them, and also built a meeting-house soon after. I have an old list of the members that belonged to the Coventry Church in 1770, in which it is said that they still had no meeting-house, and that they still held their meetings in the above-mentioned rotation. But for various reasons, I feel sure it was built soon after. I think in 1772.

“Very respectfully,

“Your friend,

“ABRAHAM H. CASSEL.”

After the receipt of the foregoing letter I called upon Mrs. Catharine Keim, a daughter of James Wells referred to in the letter. She said that she had always been told that the meeting-house was built in the year in which she was born; and she was born in 1817.

After the proceedings had been entered, the following sketch of the Coventry Brethren Church was received from Abraham H. Cassel, dated April 12, 1890.

“A SHORT SKETCH OF THE COVENTRY BRETHERN CHURCH.

“Mainly from the writings of Morgan Edwards.

“The Coventry Church is so called from the township in which it is located. It was organized in 1724, when Martin Urner and wife, Henry Landis and wife, Daniel Eiker and wife, Peter Heffly, Owen Longacre, and Andrew Sell did unite to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to walk in unity and love, having called Elder Peter Becker to their assistance.

“The first minister that they had was the above-named

Martin Urner. He was born in Alsace, then a province of France, in 1695, and was bred in the Presbyterian faith. He came to America before 1715, and embraced the principles of the Brethren in 1722, and was baptized in 1723. He was ordained to the office of bishop by Elder Alexander Mack in 1729, at which time he took on himself the entire oversight of the church. He died in 1755, and was buried in the Coventry Brethren Graveyard. His wife was Catharine Reist, by whom he had three children, Mary, Martin, and Jacob. They married into the Wolfe, Edis, and Light, or Lichty, families. His assistant was Casper Ingles.

"The church increased fast, and in 1770 would have been a very large congregation had not so many gone away to get better lands elsewhere, as they were mostly husbandmen. Numbers went to what was then called the Conococheague, in Franklin and Perry Counties, in Pennsylvania, and some also to Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

"The next minister was Martin Urner, Jr. He was nephew of the older Martin Urner. He was born in 1725, in New Hanover Township, then in Philadelphia, now Montgomery, County. He was ordained in 1756, at which time he took on himself the care and oversight of the church. His assistant in the ministry was Peter Reinhart. This Martin Urner was married to Barbara Switzer, by whom he had four children, Mary, Joseph, Martin, and Elizabeth.

"The Coventry Church always had a very efficient local ministry, as their early preachers were all men of talent and ability, and were often visited by able preachers of other localities and of other denominations, such as Morgan Edwards, Elhanan Winchester, George De Benneville, Peter Keyser, and others. [Peter Keyser was baptized by Martin Urner in 1784.] The following list of members in 1770 may seem small, but we must remember that great numbers moved away, that some joined Conrad Beissel's Fraternity at Ephrata, and that several also were led astray by the Moravian Count Zinzendorf, and that many were carried away by death.

"From corroborative facts known to me, I have no doubt but that the Coventry Church had hundreds of additions between its organization in 1724 and its census in 1770.

"ABRAHAM H. CASSEL.

"HARLEYSVILLE, April 12, 1890."

LIST OF MEMBERS OF COVENTRY BRETHERN CHURCH  
IN 1770.

|                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Martin Urner and wife, Barbara. | John Eiker.                         |
| Peter Reinhart.                 | Jacob Pfoutz and wife.              |
| Owen Reinhart.                  | Abraham Bach.                       |
| Henry Dasker and wife.          | Andrew Wolff.                       |
| Nicholas Harwick and wife.      | Esther Switzer ( <i>née</i> Urner). |
| Abraham Grubb and wife.         | Wendel Danfelder.                   |
| Christian Monsieur.             | Henry Bear and wife.                |
| Barbara Miller.                 | Jacob Switzer and wife.             |
| Barbara Welty.                  | Maud Reinhart.                      |
| Frederick Reinhart and wife.    | Jacob Light and wife.               |
| Barbara Urner.                  | Philip Waggoner and wife.           |
| Elizabeth Ingles.               | Elizabeth Halderman.                |
| Catharine Grumbacher.           | Anthony Bernard and daughter.       |
| Catharine Bach.                 | John Light and wife.                |

The above list is taken from Morgan Edwards's work.

In the year 1890 the Coventry Church, with its two branches, Parkerford and Harmonyville, had three hundred and twenty members.

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LIST OF PREACHERS OF THE COVENTRY BRETHERN  
CHURCH FROM 1724 TO 1898.

|                            | Born. | Died. |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Martin Urner, Sr. . . . .  | 1695  | 1755  |
| Martin Urner, Jr. . . . .  | 1725  | 1799  |
| Jonas Urner . . . . .      | 1772  | 1813  |
| Casper Ingles . . . . .    |       |       |
| Peter Reinhart . . . . .   | 1733  | 1806  |
| Martin Reinhart . . . . .  | 1757  | 1820  |
| Abraham Reinhart . . . . . | 1770  | 1842  |
| George Price . . . . .     | 1753  | 1823  |
| John Price, Sr. . . . .    | 1782  | 1850  |

## LIST OF PREACHERS OF THE COVENTRY BRETHERN CHURCH FROM 1724 TO 1898.—Continued.

|                              |      |      |
|------------------------------|------|------|
| John Price, Jr. . . . .      | 1810 | 1879 |
| Jacob Harley . . . . .       | 1786 | 1842 |
| John Harley . . . . .        | 1812 | 1895 |
| David Keim . . . . .         | 1802 | 1897 |
| Peter Hollowbush . . . . .   | 1805 | 1872 |
| Jacob Conner . . . . .       | 1834 |      |
| Isaac Urner Brower . . . . . | 1844 |      |
| Jesse P. Hetric . . . . .    | 1844 |      |
| John Y. Eisenberg . . . . .  | 1840 |      |

As many of the facts connected with the early history of the Brethren Church in America, and of the early history of the Coventry Church, and of the connection of the Urners with these organizations, are found in Morgan Edwards's work, and as copies of this book are becoming very rare, those parts of the history relating immediately to the subjects under consideration are here appended.



## MATERIALS

TOWARD

## A History of the American Baptists.

BY

MORGAN EDWARDS, A.M.,

Fellow of Rhode Island College and Overseer of the Baptist Church  
in Philadelphia.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

PHILADELPHIA :

PRINTED BY JOSEPH CRUKSHANK AND ISAAC COLLINS.

MDCCLXX.

“ VOL. I., PART IV.

“Treats of the Germans in Pennsylvania who are commonly called Tunkers, to distinguish them from the Mennonites, for both are styled Die Täufer, or Baptists.

“The first appearance of these people in America was in the fall of the year 1719, when about twenty families landed in Philadelphia and dispersed, some to Germantown, some to Skippack, some to Oley, some to Conestoga, and elsewhere. The dispersion incapacitated them to meet for public worship, and therefore they soon began to grow lukewarm in religion. But in the year 1722, Messieurs Baker, Gomery, Gantz, and the Trauts visited their scattered brethren, which was attended with great revival, in so much that societies were formed wherever a number of families were within reach one of another. But this lasted not above three years. They settled on their lees again, till about thirty families more of their persecuted brethren arrived in the fall of 1729, which both quickened them again and increased their number

everywhere. These two companies had been members of one and the same church, which originated at Schwarzenau in the year 1708. The first constituents were Alexander Mack and wife, John Kipin and wife, George Grevy, Andreas Bhone, Lucas Fetter, and Joanna Nethigeim. These had been bred Presbyterians, except Kipin, who was a Lutheran, and, being neighbors, they consorted together to read the Bible and edify one another in the way they had been brought up; for as yet they did not know that there were any Baptists in the world. However, believer's baptism and a congregational church soon gained upon them, in so much that they were determined to obey the Gospel in these matters. They desired Alexander Mack to baptize them; but he, deeming himself, in reality, unbaptized, refused. Upon which they cast lots to find who should be administrator. On whom the lot fell hath been carefully concealed. However, baptized they were in the River Eder by Schwarzenau; and then formed themselves into a church, choosing Alexander Mack to be their minister. They increased fast, and began to spread their branches to Merienborn and Epstein, having John Naass and Christian Levy to their ministers in these places. But persecutions quickly drove them thence, some to Holland and some to Cryfelt. Soon after, the Mother Church voluntarily moved from Schwarzenau to Serustervin, in Frezland; and from thence migrated to America in 1719. And in 1729 those of Cryfelt and Holland followed their brethren. Thus we see that all the Tunker Churches in America sprang from the church of Schwarzenau, in Germany; that that church began in 1708, with only seven souls, and that in a place where no Baptist had been in the memory of man, nor any now are. In sixty-two years *that*

*little one has become a thousand, and that small one a great nation.*

“BEGGARSTOWN. [GERMANTOWN.]

“This takes its name from a village of the above name, in the township of Germantown, eight miles north by west from that city. The meeting-house is of stone, thirty feet square, erected this year [1770] on a lot of eighty rods, the gift of one Peter Shilbert. On the same lot stands their old building, erected by one John Pettikoffer for his dwelling in 1731; and because it was the first house in the place, and erected by a beggar, the village assumed the name of Beggarstown. The families belonging to the congregation are about thirty; whereof fifty-seven persons are baptized and in the communion of the church. This was the state in 1770. For their beginning we have no farther back to look than December 25, 1723, when the following persons (some baptized in Germany and some in this country) formed themselves into a society having Peter Baker to their minister; and had the Lord’s Supper and Love-feast, etc., for the first time they were celebrated in the Province. [For names, see pages 10 and 11.]

“REV. PETER BAKER.

“He was born in 1687, at Dilsheim, in Germany. Educated a Presbyterian. Embraced the principles of the Baptists in 1714. Arrived in this country in 1719. Settled with the church of Beggarstown in 1723. Went to Skippack in 1747, where he died and was buried March 19, 1758. He married Dorothy Partman, by whom he had two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, who married into the Harley and Stump families and have raised him fifteen grandchildren. Whatever his

real character was, yet this may be said of him, he labored more abundantly than all of his contemporaries. His successor, who had also been his colleague, was

“REV. ALEXANDER MACK.

“He was born in the year 1680, at Schrisheim, in Germany. Was educated a Calvinist. Embraced the Baptist principles in 1708. Arrived in this country with many of his congregation in 1729, and became a minister of Beggarstown the same year. Died in 1735 and was buried at Germantown. He married Anna Magareta Kling, by whom he had children, Valentine, John, Alexander (now minister of Beggarstown), who married into the Hildebrand, Sneider, and Nice families, and have raised him many grandchildren. His fourth child was Anna, now a single sister at Ephrata. Mr. Mack was a man of real piety. He had a handsome patrimony at Schrisheim, with a profitable mill and vineyard thereon, but spent all in raising and maintaining his church at Schwarzenau, whereof he was father and the father of all the Tunkers. His successor is his son,

“REV. ALEXANDER MACK.

“He was born at Schwarzenau, January 28, 1712. Baptized in 1728. Arrived in America in 1729. Ordained in 1749, at which time he took on him the care of the church. He married Elizabeth Nice, by whom he has children, William, Sarah, Hannah, Lydia, Elizabeth, Margaret. Mr. Mack is a sincere, good man.

“COVENTRY CHURCH.

“This takes its distinction from the township where most of the members reside, in the county of Chester, thirty-seven miles northwest by west from Philadelphia.

These people have no public place of worship, but hold their meetings in a kind of rotation at five private houses. The present minister is Mr. Martin Urner, who has to his assistance Mr. Peter Reinhart. The families belonging to them are about twenty-two, whereof forty are baptized. [Here in a foot-note the names of the forty members are given, as found on page 21, preceding.] This was their fate in 1770. For their original we must look back to 1724, when one Daniel Eiker and wife, Henry Landis and wife, Peter Heffly, Martin Urner, Owen Longacre, and Andrew Sell (who had been baptized before) did unite to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to walk together in love, having Rev. Peter Baker to their assistance. They increased fast, and would now be a very large society had not so many families gone away to Virginia, Carolina, and other parts. The first minister they had was

“REV. MARTIN URNER.

“He was born in Alsace about 1695, and was bred a Presbyterian. He came to America in 1715. [Earlier.] He embraced the principles of the Baptists in 1722. He was ordained by Rev. Alexander Mack in 1729, at which time he took on him the oversight of the church. He died in 1755 and was buried in the graveyard at Coventry. His wife was Catharine Reist, by whom he had children, Mary, Martin, Jacob. These married into the Wolf, Edis, and Light families. Assistant to Mr. Urner was one Casper Ingles. The next and present minister is

“REV. MARTIN URNER.

“He is nephew to the forementioned Martin Urner. Was born in 1725 in New Hanover Township and

county of Philadelphia. Ordained in 1756, at which time he took on him the care of the congregation. His assistant is Peter Reinhart. Mr. Urner married Barbara Switzer, by whom he has children, Mary, Joseph, Martin, and Elizabeth.

“EPHRATA.

“This church was distinguished by the above name, which is the name of the village where it exists, in Cocalico Township and Lancaster County, sixty miles west-northwest by west from Philadelphia. The same village is frequently called Tunkerstown. It consists of about thirty or forty buildings, and stands on a parcel of land containing one hundred and fifty-five acres.

“They had their existence as a society on November 12, 1724, when Conrad Beissel, Joseph Shaffer, John Mayer and wife, Heinrich Hehn and wife, and Veronica Frederick were baptized in Pequea River by Rev. Peter Baker. On the same day these seven incorporated into a church and chose Conrad Beissel to be their minister. After this they continued some time at Mill Creek, and then removing about three miles northward, pitched on the land of Rudolph Neagley, in Earl Township. Here they continued about seven years; and hither resorted many to see them, some of which joined the society. Here they began their economy, the men living by themselves on the forementioned lands, and the women also by themselves on the adjoining lands of John Moyley. Here Conrad Beissel appointed two elders and a matron to preside over his church in the wilderness, binding them by a solemn promise (and at the same time giving to each a testament) to govern according to the rules of that book. Then he withdrew, and made as though they should see him no more. This

was done in the year 1733. He travelled northward till he came to the spot where Ephrata, or Tunkertown, now stands, and with his hoe planted Indian corn and roots for his subsistence. But he had not been long in the place before his society found him out and repaired to his little cot; the brethren settling with him on the west bank of the Cocalico, and the sisters in the east, all in sight of one another, with the river running between them. The next year they set about building their village, beginning with a place of worship. The village is enclosed with a ditch and fortified with posts and rails and quicksets. The founder of this people and their minister was

“REV. CONRAD BEISSEL.

“This was his real name; but when he became a Baptist he assumed the name of Friedsam Gottrecht, and gave new names to all the brethren and sisters. He was born in 1690, at Eberbach in Germany. Bred a Presbyterian. Arrived in Boston in 1720. Thence he and his two companions, Stunts and Steiffel, travelled westward to Pennsylvania and lived as hermits about Millcreek and Swedesprings, in Lancaster County. He embraced the principles of the Baptists in 1724. Died July 6, 1768, and was buried at Ephrata. As for his character, I give it in the words of one who knew him well:

““He was very strict in his morals and practised self-denial and mortification to an uncommon degree. Enthusiastic and whimsical he certainly was, but an apparent devoutness and sincerity ran through all his oddities. He was not an adept in any of the liberal arts and sciences except music, in which he excelled. He composed and set to music (in three, four, six, and

eight parts) a folio volume of hymns and another of anthems. He published a dissertation on the fall of man in the mysterious strain; also a volume of letters. He left behind several books in manuscript curiously written and embellished. It is expected that his life will be published by his successor and the present minister of Ephrata.'”

[The expected “life” or work just referred to has been published and is called “Chronicon Ephratense.” An extract from this work, referring to Rev. Martin Urner, appears on page 9, preceding.]

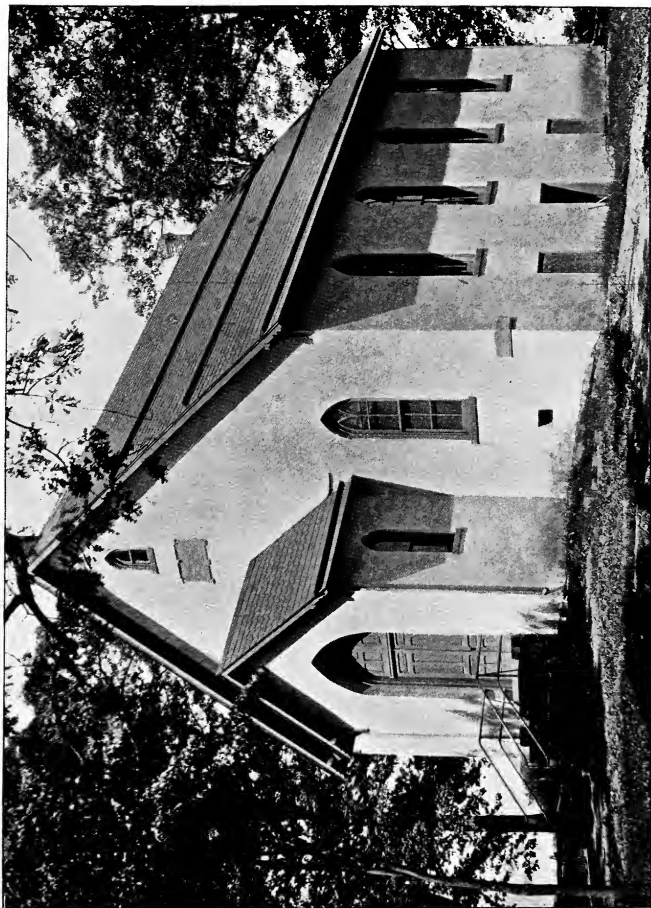
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS PREACHERS FROM  
ITS ORGANIZATION IN 1724 TO 1898.

THE THREE URNERS.

Ulrich Urner, with his three sons, Jacob, Martin, and Hans, came to America from Europe, from Alsace, then a province of France, about 1708, certainly before 1712, as the name of Martin Urner, one of the three sons, is found in the list of land-owners of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in that year. Originally the family belonged to the Canton of Uri, in Switzerland, as the name unmistakably shows. The inhabitants of that canton are called Urners, as the inhabitants of the Canton Schwytz are called Switzers. The name Urner is common in Uri and in different parts of Switzerland as a geographical designation, as Urner See or lake, Urner Boden or territory, and Urner Loch or tunnel.

About the year 1682 religious persecution drove the Urners out of Switzerland into Alsace, from whence they emigrated to America in 1708. In 1718 Martin Urner, the founder of the Coventry Brethren Church,





COVENTRY BRETHERN CHURCH. THIRD BUILDING. ERECTED IN 1890.



bought of the Penns nominally three hundred and fifty-six, but really four hundred and fifty, acres of land on the Schuylkill, immediately opposite the present town of Pottstown, on part of which purchase Coventry Brethren Church and Coventry Brethren Graveyard are located. The original land surveys along the river had only four sides, one being the river itself, and two of the other sides being substantially parallel to each other and at right angles to the river. The road passing the church and running through Kenilworth marks one of these sides, and the road passing the graveyard marks the other. The Urner patent extended over a mile back from the river.

The Urner family, as noted in the above list, gave three preachers to the church founded by the first of them. These preached continuously to the church from the time of its founding, 1724, down to 1810, when the last of them, Jonas Urner, moved to Maryland. So they preached to the church eighty-seven years, just one-half of the church's existence, down to the present time, 1898.

#### CASPER INGLES.

Nothing is known of Casper Ingles, except the statement of Morgan Edwards that he was assistant to the first bishop, Martin Urner. In the list of the members of the Coventry Church in 1770, as given by Morgan Edwards, the name of Elizabeth Ingles occurs, possibly the widow of Casper Ingles, or a sister or daughter.

#### THE THREE REINHARTS.

Ulrich Reinhart was the first of the family to come to America. He arrived in Philadelphia, August 28, 1733, in ship "Hope," of London, Daniel Reid, master,

from Rotterdam, last from Cowes. He married three times. By his first wife he had four sons,—Rev. Peter, who was assistant to second bishop, Martin Urner, Frederick, Ulrich, and John. By his second wife he had, as far as known, two children,—Rev. Martin Reinhart and David Reinhart. Nothing is known as to children by the third wife. Ulrich, the immigrant, settled on a farm on the right side of the Schuylkill River, in Coventry Township, a half-mile below Frick's Lock, Chester County, Pennsylvania, which farm subsequently passed to his son, Rev. Martin Reinhart, then to John Baugh, and is now, 1898, owned by David Updegrove. He was buried in the Union Graveyard at Parkerford, with the following inscription on his tombstone:

U. R.  
Feb. 12, 1787  
a. 82½

Two of his sons, Peter and Martin, and a grandson, Abraham, successively became preachers in the Coventry Church. Morgan Edwards, writing in 1770, states that at that time Peter Reinhart was assistant to the second bishop, Martin Urner. As Peter Reinhart was then thirty-seven years old, it is probable that he had been preaching some years before. In those days men commenced preaching early. As the last of the Reinhart preachers, Abraham Reinhart, died in 1842, the three Reinharts probably, too, preached to the Coventry Church some eighty odd years.

#### THE THREE PRICES.

Jacob Preisz was the immigrant ancestor of the Prices who subsequently became prominent among the Brethren. He was a Prussian and came to America in

1719. About 1721 he settled at Indian Creek, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. He had but one son, Johannes or John. This Johannes Preisz, without much doubt, is the one mentioned on page 11, preceding. When Martin Urner with his company of six applied for baptism at Germantown, in the fall of 1723, this name, Johannes Preisz, occurs among the names of the seventeen who were induced to organize themselves into a church that they might administer baptism to the six applicants. In 1770, when Morgan Edwards wrote his History of the Baptists, the name still retained its German spelling, Johannes Preisz.

In August, 1773, Daniel Price, a descendant, living at Indian Creek, bought land in Nantmeal Township, Chester County, for his son George, who settled there in 1774, his name appearing among the taxables of Nantmeal Township in that year. He continued to live in Nantmeal until 1794, when he sold out his Nantmeal property and bought a farm in Coventry Township, at the present Laurel Hill Locks, where he himself and his son John, the second preacher of the family in Chester County, and his grandson John, the third preacher of his family, continued to dwell during their lives. George Price started a Brethren interest in Nantmeal while he lived there and continued to labor in it until the time of his death in 1823. After moving to Coventry Township in 1794 he also took turns with the Urners and Reinharts in preaching to the Coventry Church. According to the letter of Isaac Price, before referred to, the Nantmeal interest did not prosper after the death of George Price, the members drifting into other churches or back into the world.

When George Price moved to Coventry Township the Coventry Church was seventy years old.

## THE TWO HARLEYS.

The Harley family furnished two preachers to the Coventry Church, Jacob Harley and his son John Harley.

Rudolph Harley, the first of the family in America, came to Germantown, September 15, 1729, in the ship "Allen," James Craigie, master, from Rotterdam, with the second colony of Brethren, which included Alexander Mack and thirty families. This Rudolph Harley had a son Rudolph and one daughter. This Rudolph, of the second generation, married Mary, daughter of Peter Becker, who was so prominent in the Germantown Church. Rudolph Harley and Mary Becker had thirteen children. Among them were Hannah, born in 1743, who married Ulrich Stauffer, grandfather of the late Owen Stover and great-grandfather of Eliza G. Urner, wife of the writer of this sketch; Rudolph, of the third generation, born in 1749, who married Barbara Bach, of the well-known Baugh family of the neighborhood; Sarah, born June, 1756, who married George Price, mentioned before as the first of the three Price preachers of the Coventry Church; and Samuel, born March, 1758, who married Catharine Saur, of the prominent Brethren family of that name at Germantown. This Samuel was the founder of Harleysville, Montgomery County, to which place he moved in 1790. Abraham Harley Cassel, of Harleysville, the historian of the Brethren Church, is a grandson of Samuel Harley, the founder of Harleysville.

Of the fourth generation, Rudolph Harley and Barbara Bach had eleven children,—Rudolph, Samuel, John, Abraham, *Rev. Jacob*, the first of the two Harley preachers of the Coventry Church; Sarah, wife of Jo-

seph Reiff; Elizabeth, wife of Abram Grubb; Barbara, wife of Peter Stager; Hannah, wife of John Reifsnider; Mary, wife of David Grubb; and, by a second marriage, Benjamin, late justice of the peace in North Coventry Township, Chester County.

Jacob Harley was the last who preached in German in the Coventry Church. Many of his predecessors had used the English language in their preaching.

#### DAVID KEIM.

The first of the Keim family came to America about 1709 and settled originally in Oley Township, Berks County. On page 10 of Rupp's "Collection of Thirty Thousand Names" the following paragraph occurs: "Germans and French located [between 1709 and 1717] on the fertile lands of Wahlink [Oley]. Among the prominent families in Oley were the Turcks or De Turcks, Bertolets, Berdos, De la Plaines, Delangs, Loras, Levans, Yoder, *Keim*, Herbain, Schaub, Engel, Weidner, Schneider, and Alstadt."

Subsequently members of the family moved out in different directions. One branch located in Reading, one in Bucks County, and a third in Chester County at the Yellow Springs. The head of this last branch was named Hans or Johannes,—in English, John. Afterwards this Hans or John settled at or near the present village of Harmonyville, in Warwick Township. He had four sons,—George, John, Peter, and Stephens.

George Keim, just named, was the grandfather of Rev. David Keim. He was born December 3, 1753, and died December 3, 1838. His wife was Catharine Shingle, born January 5, 1757, and died June 5, 1838. The parents of Rev. David Keim were Jacob Keim,

born February 6, 1776, and died September 21, 1823, and Hannah Switzer, born May 14, 1781, and died April 4, 1855. Hannah Switzer was daughter of Ulrich Switzer and Hester Urner.

The property or homestead that Hans Keim, great-grandfather of Rev. David Keim, purchased at Harmonyville has been in the family ever since. It is now owned by Jonathan Keim, of Pottstown, the nursery-man.

Rev. David Keim at one time lived in Coventry Township, Chester County, but in 1845 he moved to Warwick Township, and soon commenced building up a Brethren interest there. His labors were blessed, and he lived to see the interest grow and develop into the present Harmonyville Church, with its fine, commodious meeting-house. He was a bishop in the Brethren Church.

The parents and grandparents of Rev. David Keim are buried in the cemetery of the Second Reformed Church of Coventry (Shenkel's). His remains and those of his wife are interred in the Coventry Brethren Graveyard.

Rev. Lewis M. Keim is a grandnephew of David Keim.

#### PETER HOLLOWBUSH.

Rev. Peter Hollowbush, for thirty years an acceptable and loved minister of the Coventry Brethren Church, was descended from Christian Hollowbush, a great-grandfather, who came to America from the Palatinate in Germany in 1720 and settled near Zieglerstown, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Christian Hollowbush had a son Henry, whose second son, John, living in Limerick Township, was the father of the preacher. Peter Hollowbush was born in Limerick



Township, June 2, 1805. In early life he learned the milling business, and located as a journeyman miller in what is now known as Parkerford. On March 25, 1828, he married Hannah Wilson, daughter of John and Mary (Parker) Wilson. The family of his mother-in-law, the Parkers, gave name to Parkerford, and it was at the Parker mill, situated at the old Parker Ford crossing the Schuylkill River, that he worked as journeyman miller.

About the year 1840 he united with the Brethren Church, and on November 5, 1842, he was elected to the ministry, in which he labored faithfully until the time of his death, March 13, 1872.

Mr. Hollowbush was blessed in having six children, who grew up and married, of all of whom there are offspring now living. There are four daughters, all living,—Mrs. John S. Frederick, Mrs. Harrison Harley, Mrs. Joseph H. Stamm, all of North Coventry Township, Chester County, and Mrs. Mary Cook, of Harrisburg,—and two sons, both dead,—John H. Hollowbush, survived by one daughter, Miss Stella Hollowbush, of Pottstown, and Henry H. Hollowbush, survived by one son, William H. Hollowbush, Esq., of Mount Joy, Lancaster County.

#### JACOB CONNER.

Jacob Conner, son of Jesse and Susanna Conner, *née* Landis, was born in Skippack Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, March 7, 1834. He was raised in Limerick Township, Montgomery County, as farmers' boys usually were, and educated in subscription day schools in the common branches of reading, writing, and arithmetic. He was converted and baptized at the Indian Creek Brethren Church in the eighteenth year

of his age. His parents were converted and baptized about five years prior. He married Hannah Jane Eisenberg in his twenty-third year, she being the daughter of John and Hannah Eisenberg and sister of John Y. and William Y. Eisenberg. His wife's parents were members of the Coventry Brethren Church. He moved into Coventry Township, Chester County, in 1861, but did not transfer his membership to the Coventry Church till several years later, at which time he entered heartily into church and Sunday-school work, being a Sunday-school teacher for some years. He was elected to the ministry May 25, 1872, having previously served as deacon for several years. His efforts received good encouragement from the church and the community. When advanced to the second degree in the ministry later, so as to be authorized to baptize and solemnize marriages, still more of his time and attention was required. His labors in the ministry were not only in the Coventry Church, but also in the Parkerford and Harmonyville Churches and at Franklin. He also filled appointments in other churches in adjacent counties. He also served at funerals in and out of the church in the community. He attended District and Annual Conferences as representative. For a number of years he was a member of the Mission Board of Eastern Pennsylvania. The school interests at Huntingdon were encouraged from their earliest organization both by funds and patronage. For some years he was a trustee of the college at Huntingdon. All his children attended that college. He served in the Coventry Church until 1889, when he moved back to Montgomery County, to Gratersford, where he has been laboring in the ministry every since.

## ISAAC URNER BROWER.

Isaac Urner Brower, the sixteenth minister in order of succession in the Coventry Brethren Church, was elected and installed into the sacred office A.D. 1875, and advanced to the second degree of the ministry A.D. 1880.

He was the third son of Gilbert and Lydia Brower, and was born in Coventry Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania, upon the old Martin Urner homestead, January 7, 1844. His ancestry on the paternal side has been traced back five generations, to Hubert Brower and Anna, his wife, Mennonites, who came from the Palatinate and settled on the Schuylkill as early as 1726. His maternal ancestry descended from the old and historic Urner family of Canton Uri, Switzerland, one of whose members, Ulrich Urner, went in 1682 to Alsace, France, from whence he, with his three sons, Jacob, Martin, and John, came to Philadelphia in 1708. Jacob Urner died in 1744, and his son, Martin, second Bishop of Coventry Church, was the father of Martin Urner, Jr., whose son, John Urner, married Elizabeth Grubb, to which union were born Isaac N. Urner and Lydia Urner, the mother of the subject of this sketch.

Isaac Urner Brower had the advantage of a good academic and normal school education, whereby he became fitted for an instructor of youth. Subsequently he taught for a period of twelve terms in the public schools of his own and adjoining counties.

Early in life he became identified with the Brethren Church, by which, in after-years, he was called to the ministry. He also served, for a number of years, as the efficient superintendent of the Brethren Sabbath-school of the Parkerford Church.

The subject of this sketch was united in marriage to Mary A. Johnson, daughter of Abraham and Elizabeth Johnson, January 2, 1868. They have one child, Dr. Charles J. Brower, born June 29, 1871, now engaged in the practice of medicine in Spring City, Pennsylvania.

JESSE P. HETRIC.

Jesse P. Hetric was born of German parentage in Mahoning Township, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, on December 20, 1843. His father was a farmer, and the son resided on the farm and worked as most farmer boys are required to do. He attended the district school near by for the usual term of three months annually. In this way, by dint of effort and use of spare moments, he qualified for teaching, and took his first teacher's examination in the fall of 1863, and taught his first term of three months during the winter of 1863-64 at the salary of nineteen dollars and fifty cents per month. His early religious convictions were very marked and singularly clear. But with his naturally light-minded disposition and fondness for the pursuits of pleasure, he was able for a time to stifle his sense of responsibility. Two events in his life enforced and deepened his convictions and hastened his conversion. He nearly lost his life by drowning on a Sunday boating expedition, and at another time, when recklessly riding a young horse in the field, he was thrown and came near being trampled to death. Though a careless youth, yet in these preservations God's hand was so clearly manifest as to enforce thoughtfulness as to duty to God. The death of his mother in December, 1863, and that of his oldest brother the following January, had a strong bearing in completing conviction and conversion. He was bap-

tized and received into the old Redbank Church by Elder James Quinter on September 5, 1864. Being anxious for more mental training than the common schools afforded him, he in the spring of 1865 entered Reid Institute and continued there till he graduated in the fall of 1870. His intention was to enter the medical profession, but this was changed for him when on June 30, 1865, he was elected to the ministry in the Redbank Church. He yielded his own chosen profession for the Master's call to duty. He continued his studies to thus fit himself for more usefulness in the higher calling, and the record of his life, the numerous conversions under his preaching, abundantly justify his divine call. The charge of his home church soon fell to his lot. At the close of his school life two other churches, the Glade Run and Cowanshanock, became part of his charge. With three churches to minister to and numerous calls for evangelistic services, his time and talents were taxed to the utmost.

On the 19th of November, 1872, he was united in marriage with Hannah J. King, daughter of Jacob and Sarah A. King, of Clarion County, Pennsylvania, an estimable lady, an old school friend, and his assistant teacher for two terms of school work.

In April, 1874, he removed to Philadelphia and took charge of the Marshall Street Church, where he continued for eight years as pastor, at the same time making frequent trips for evangelistic services in the surrounding country. In April, 1877, he met with the great loss and sorrow of his life in the death of his estimable wife. Notwithstanding he was broken down in physical health and discouraged in heart, he took up the duties of life alone in the city church.

In June, 1882, he resigned his city charge and took

a vacation of five months. In November of the same year he moved to Parkerford, Chester County, Pennsylvania, and entered upon his labors in the Coventry Church, where he is located at the present time. After laboring in this church for sixteen years he, on January 8, 1898, formally presented his resignation as pastor—still remaining the elder—of the church. The church, at his request, has tried to supply the pulpit with a younger minister, thus giving the subject of this sketch a release from the more arduous duties of the pastorate and an opportunity of more retirement.

#### JOHN Y. EISENBERG.

Lawrence Eisenberg was born 1763, and married Ruth Jones in 1790. A number of children blessed this union, of whom John was the eldest and father of the subject of this sketch.

John Y. Eisenberg, son of John and Hannah Eisenberg, was born in Limerick Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, June 2, 1840. On the 30th of April, 1851, John Eisenberg, father of John Y., died, leaving the young John to battle life without a father. His educational advantages were such as the ordinary public schools afforded to the youth of his age, with an addition of three terms of three months each spent at Washington Hall, Trappe. He commenced teaching school November 3, 1856, and taught twelve consecutive terms. He has spent the balance of his life as farmer and clerk respectively. He was married to Mary A. Isett, January 3, 1863. Three surviving children blessed this union,—Ida Emma, J. I. Linwood, and Paul I.

John Y. Eisenberg was converted to God and baptized and received as member of the Brethren Church

August, 1858, at Mingo, known as the Indian Creek Church, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. He moved to Chester County, Pennsylvania, March 31, 1863, and transferred his membership to the Coventry Church. He was elected deacon May 25, 1872, and was elected to the ministry August, 1880. He labored for the Coventry Church at Harmonyville, Parkerford, and Coventry, and also filled appointments, by request, at Mingo, Germantown, Norristown, Upper Dublin, and at Royersford mission.

Since April 1, 1893, he has been identified with a mission at Royersford, giving most of his ministerial labor to said mission.

#### AS TO THE NAME,

DURING THE EARLY AGE OF THE CHURCH, DURING ITS MIDDLE AGE, AND DURING THE MODERN AGE.

The three historic churches of the Brethren denomination are the Germantown Church, founded December 25, 1723; the Coventry Church, founded November 7, 1724; and the Ephrata Church, Lancaster County, founded November 12, 1724; all within less than one year of each other. No other churches of any importance were founded then for some years; not until several years after the arrival from Europe in 1729 of the second colony of Brethren of thirty families with Alexander Mack.

For the early history of the Coventry Church we are indebted to the intimate relation that existed between its first preachers and the preachers of neighboring churches; all records that may have been kept by the church being subsequently lost. Morgan Edwards, of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, and the

“Chronicon Ephratense” of the Ephrata Church have preserved its history for us. Subsequently, no records being kept, the church went into eclipse for years, and when it emerged some of the members had so completely lost all knowledge of its history that they did not even know its name, and when they wished to speak of it they used the name of one of its preachers. Abroad, everywhere it continued to be known by its real name. At times some Brethren thought it wrong to keep church records. But that is changed. The world moves, and the Coventry Church moves too, as does the great Brethren denomination.

Recently the president of the most prominent of the Brethren colleges has written to the authorities of the Coventry Church for information about Martin Urner, the founder of the church, and for items in its history. He is preparing a history of the early churches and the denomination.

Quite recently, too, an organization has been formed for gathering and preserving material for an extensive history of the various churches and of the denomination at large. Among the officers of this organization, Abraham H. Cassel, of Harleysville, has been made president, a prominent preacher of Virginia is vice-president, a rising preacher of our neighborhood is secretary, and a Philadelphia preacher is treasurer.

The Brethren denomination has become numerous, wealthy, and progressive, and its one hundred thousand members will exert immense influence on this nation and on the world. There was a time when some of the Brethren discouraged education, especially of the higher kind. Now they have eight or ten colleges in as many different States.

As is thus perceived, the church has been known in



the past and is now known everywhere, except by some in the immediate surrounding neighborhood, as the Coventry Church, or, more specifically, as the Coventry Brethren Church. Morgan Edwards, in his "Materials toward a History of the American Baptists," who wrote in 1770, knew the church by that name, and knew it by no other name, because it had no other name. Abraham H. Cassel, of Harleysville, Montgomery County, the recognized historian of the Brethren Church, knows it by no other name; see, for example, on page 19, preceding, "A Short Sketch of the Coventry Brethren Church." The late Isaac Price, in his frequent visits to the Parkerford (then Lawrenceville) Brethren Church, in referring to the Coventry Church, always spoke of it as the Coventry Church, or "Coventry Meeting."

It is not uncommon for churches in their home localities to be spoken of for temporary convenience by the name of the preacher then in charge. Some twenty-five or thirty years ago Emanuel Lutheran Church of Pottstown was frequently spoken of and written about in the local newspapers as Kepner's Church, the name of the preacher in charge at that time; the Church of the Transfiguration was then Koerner's Church, after its pastor at that time; and Trinity Reformed Church Evan's Church. But that is changed now. Pottstown has got to know her churches by their own names, and not by the names of their preachers.

While churches may temporarily be known by the name of the preacher, when he leaves, the church resumes its own name. To this common, usual course there are, however, occasional, rare exceptions in struggling country churches. Some one man, or several it may be, who thinks keeping a family name fastened on

the church will be a sort of patent of nobility, commences a fight to force the poor church to retain the family name as its permanent name. The two principal means employed are, first, to keep the coveted name before the public through the local newspapers on all possible occasions, and, secondly, utilizing, through the supervisor if possible, the road-pointer boards at all cross-roads leading towards the church.

But suppose there are two names. Originally and for long years this church was known everywhere as the Coventry Church. Abroad everywhere still it is known by that name. At home some know it by the name of "Price's Meeting." Which name should be adopted? The rule always is to take the first or original name, unless there is some special reason to the contrary. "Priority is the fundamental law of nomenclature." This rule is of common application. It prevails in historical works, in treatises on the sciences, and elsewhere generally.

Generally the name adopted or fastened upon a church does not matter much. Sometimes it is of much importance. That is the case with the Coventry Church, because this church is one of the three original historic churches of the Brethren denomination in America. Excepting possibly the Germantown Church, it is historically the most important of all the Brethren churches. To allow any other name than its historical name to be fastened upon it is to blot out its history. "He who ignores his past gives up his future." This principle applies to churches as well as to nations and individuals. Many years ago Peter Keyser was a prominent preacher of the Germantown Church. Suppose the members of that church were to call it Keyser's Church, as probably they sometimes did while

he was preacher, ignoring the real name of the church and its history and its early organizers and upholders, Peter Becker, Alexander Mack, and others, would not the world be justified in thinking that they, the Germantown Brethren, who ignore their past, their early history, are giving up their future? that they do not deserve to have a future?

## LIST OF MEMBERS.

List of members in 1890 of the Coventry Brethren Church and of its two sister churches, the Parkerford Brethren Church and the Harmonyville Brethren Church. The list is a copy of the one placed in the corner-stone, when the third church building was erected in 1890.

|                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Adlington, Frances. | Brower Isaac U.   |
| Amole, Ann.         | Lizzie.           |
| Hiram.              | Mary A.           |
| Ayres, Ida.         | Sallie.           |
|                     | William, M.D.     |
| Baily, Annie.       | Brown, Frank.     |
| Bealer, Sarah.      | Maria.            |
| Bennets, Willie.    | Brownback, Annie. |
| Bergy, David.       | Clinton.          |
| Elma.               | Mary.             |
| Milton.             | Stephen.          |
| Susan.              | Buckwalter, Ella. |
| Bowers, Elmira.     | John.             |
| Brannon, Keziah.    | Burns, Aaron.     |
| Newton.             | Lizzie.           |
| Brewer, Mary.       |                   |
| Thomas.             | Conner, Elmer.    |
| Brower, Arnie.      | Jacob.            |
| Blanch.             | Laura.            |
| Charles J.          | Sarah E.          |
| Gilbert.            | Susie E.          |

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Creasinger, Mary.    | Frederick, Lizzie. |
| Davis, Benjamin.     | Fregh, Frederick.  |
| Emma.                | Lydia.             |
| De Hart, William.    | Frick, Albert.     |
| Detwiler, Annie.     | Annie.             |
| Dismant, Emma.       | Charles.           |
| Lizzie.              | Elmira.            |
| Dyer, Ada.           | Ethel.             |
|                      | John.              |
|                      | Lydia.             |
| Ebert, Annie.        | Mary.              |
| Joel.                | Myra.              |
| Lizzie.              | Frock, Irene.      |
| Ecker, Hettie.       | Rosie.             |
| Jacob.               |                    |
| Lydia.               | Geyer, Jacob.      |
| Eisenberg, Ella S.   | Grubb, Henry.      |
| John Y.              | Ida.               |
| Lottie.              | Kate.              |
| Mary A.              | Mary A.            |
| William T.           | Guest, James.      |
| Ellis, Albert.       |                    |
| Angeline.            | Haldeman, David.   |
| Emaline.             | Mrs.               |
| George.              | Hannah.            |
| John.                | Rebecca.           |
| Emery, Harvy.        | Sallie.            |
| Ergood, Jacob.       | Halderman, Hannah. |
| Mary.                | John.              |
| Essick, Lydia.       | Harley, Emma.      |
| Evans, Elizabeth.    | John.              |
| Exmoyer, Sally.      | Leah.              |
|                      | Mary.              |
| Fisher, John.        | Rebecca.           |
| Mary.                | Rudolph.           |
| Frederick, Benjamin. | Rudolph, Jr.       |
| Elizabeth.           | William.           |
| Emily.               | William E.         |
| Emma.                | Hause, Elizabeth.  |
| Ida E.               | Hensey, Charles.   |
| Kate.                | Ella.              |

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Hetric, Flora L.     | Keim, Margaret.     |
| Ida.                 | Sally.              |
| Jesse P.             | William.            |
| High, Lizzie.        | Keiter, Aaron.      |
| Martha.              | Hannah.             |
| Hitner, Christopher. | Mary.               |
| Mary.                | Kendall, Elizabeth. |
| Hoffman, Catharine.  | King, Annie.        |
| Mary.                | Krause, Samuel.     |
| Nathan.              | Kulp, Aaron.        |
| Huey, James.         | Annie.              |
| Josie.               | Belle R.            |
| Hunsberger, Sue.     | Byzara.             |
|                      | David H.            |
| Irwin, Percy.        | Elizabeth.          |
| Isett, Ettie L.      | Ella.               |
| Lizzie.              | Emily.              |
|                      | John R.             |
| Johnson, Ada.        | Kitty.              |
| Andrew.              | Naomi.              |
| Hannah.              | Samuel.             |
| Joseph.              | William H.          |
|                      |                     |
| Keeler, Elizabeth.   | Lachman, Mary.      |
| William.             | Latshaw, Horace.    |
| Keeley, Annie.       | Leopold, Annie.     |
| Keim, Annie.         | Jonas.              |
| Asenath.             | Sarah.              |
| Barnie.              | Ligget, Alice.      |
| Catharine.           | Lloyd, Charles.     |
| Daniel, Mrs.         |                     |
| David.               | McCully, Maurice.   |
| George.              | McKissick, Morris.  |
| Harry.               | Martin, Jennie.     |
| Henry.               | Mary.               |
| Hiram.               | Massee, Bayerd      |
| Jonathan H.          | Metz, Rebecca.      |
| Josiah.              | Miller, Maggie.     |
| Kate.                | Missimer, Deborah.  |
| Lizzie.              | Mock, Annie.        |
| Maggie.              | Moore, Mary.        |

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Ortlip, Isaac.          | Rosen, Mary A.         |
| Susan.                  | Samuel.                |
|                         | Sue.                   |
| Patterson, Hannah.      | Rothrock, Ann.         |
| Pennypacker, Harriet S. | John.                  |
| Henry S.                | Mary.                  |
| J. Stauffer.            | Roger, Annie.          |
| Kate.                   | John.                  |
| Perkins, Joshua.        |                        |
| Pirches, Rachael.       | Saylor, Katie.         |
| Price, Catharine D.     | Lizzie.                |
| Elizabeth D.            | Savage, Amelia.        |
| Elmira.                 | Schlipf, Mamie.        |
| Lizzie.                 | Seidel, Susan.         |
| Prim, James.            | Shafer, Hettie.        |
|                         | Mrs.                   |
| Rader, Sophia.          | Shantz, Katie.         |
| Reagan, Mary.           | Shileigh, Ameriab.     |
| Reiff, Ada.             | Showalter, Emma.       |
| Clementine B.           | Sprague, James.        |
| John B., Sr.            | Jessie.                |
| John B., Jr.            | Squibb, Samuel.        |
| Reifsnnyder, Emma.      | Stackhouse, Elizabeth. |
| Hannah.                 | Stafford, William.     |
| Reinbart, Annie.        | Stager, Alice.         |
| Lavinia.                | Jacob.                 |
| Reynolds, Bessie.       | Jacob, Mrs.            |
| Ettie.                  | Stamm, Carrie.         |
| John.                   | Hattie.                |
| Lizzie.                 | Stauffer, Abraham M.   |
| William.                | Clara.                 |
| Rhoades, George.        | Henry.                 |
| Henry.                  | Henry P.               |
| Joseph.                 | Jennie.                |
| Mary.                   | John.                  |
| Richards, Llewellyn.    | John, Mrs.             |
| Roberts, Ann.           | M. Emma.               |
| Root, Kate.             | Martha.                |
| Rosen, Isaac.           | Rebecca.               |
| Jane.                   | Rebecca E.             |
| Mary.                   | Steinmetz, Jennie.     |

Steinmetz, Mary.  
 Stern, Elizabeth.  
     Katie.  
     Nathan.  
     Thomas.  
 Stoneback, Ann.  
 Stubblebine, Henry.  
     Mary.

Taylor, Samuel.  
 Titlow, Sue.  
 Towers, Annie.  
 Trego, Hattie M.  
 Turner, Alice.  
     James.  
     William.  
 Tyson, Emma.  
     Henry.  
     Katie.  
     Mary.

Umsted, Katie.  
 Urner, Charles.  
     Sarab.

Vanderslice, Elwood.  
     Mary Jane.

Walter, George.  
 Wanger, Ada.  
     Bertha.  
     Emma.

Wells, Annie.  
     David.  
     David G.  
     Elmira.  
     Katie.  
     Keziah, Sr.  
     Keziah, Jr.  
     Lewis S.  
     Oliver.

Wick, Ella.  
 Williams, Joseph.  
 Wilson, Lillian.  
 Wismer, Flora.  
     Katie.  
     Winfield.

Yocum, Sarah.  
     Susan.















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